



# Neighborhood Networks Centers Link Residents to Health Information and Services

**T**he Neighborhood Networks center at Orchard Mews, a HUD-assisted housing development in Baltimore, has the first operational Neighborhood Networks health care demonstration site. The property has partnered with a local nonprofit, Multi-Family Initiatives, to employ a full-time nurse and part-time substance abuse counselor on-site. The nurse conducts health screenings, health education and home visits for residents. She also provides case management to ensure that residents obtain appropriate levels of care from their health care providers. The center obtained a Drug Elimination Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to fund the program. HUD recognized this project as a 1998 John J. Gunther Blue Ribbon Practice in Community Development.

## Why are health information and services important components of Neighborhood Networks centers?

Low-income people suffer from illness much more often than people in higher income groups. They are also three times more likely to die sooner than their higher-income counterparts. Why? Lower-income people often have insufficient access to preventive and needed health care for a variety of reasons. Furthermore, studies show a link between access to quality health care and successful welfare-to-work efforts. By offering health care services and information, Neighborhood Networks centers can help adults to obtain and keep jobs, children to succeed in school and seniors to enjoy a better quality of life.

## How do Neighborhood Networks centers address health needs?

- **Wellness: health information and health screenings.** Many properties provide residents with health information and health screenings. For example, some senior properties screen residents for hypertension, hearing and vision loss. Some properties serving families provide residents with information on child immunization, substance abuse and teen parenting. Centers offer these services in partnership with local health departments, area agencies on aging, chapters of disease-specific organizations, community health centers and local hospitals.
- **Patient advocacy.** As the Medicaid population has shifted into managed care,

Neighborhood Networks centers and their health care partners are helping residents to successfully navigate the many health plans and providers. Center training programs teach residents how to become more responsible for their own health care. Neighborhood Networks centers are also helping to enroll children from families who earn too much to qualify for Medicaid in the new Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). CHIP allows states to voluntarily expand their Medicaid programs, create new insurance programs or implement hybrids to provide health care for children.

## Neighborhood Networks Facts...

**WHAT:** Neighborhood Networks is a community-based initiative launched by HUD's Office of Multifamily Housing in September 1995 that encourages the development of resource and computer learning centers in HUD-assisted and/or -insured housing.

- More than 620 centers in operation\*
- Thousands of business, community and government partners
- More than 744 properties with centers in planning\*

**WHO:** Serves HUD-assisted and/or -insured housing residents, owners, managers, partners and communities.

\*as of 08/00

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- **On-site health care services.** Some properties have arranged for physicians and/or nurses to conduct on-site medical assessments and case management through partnerships with schools of nursing, local hospitals and private practitioners.
- **Telehealth.** Many centers are using computer technology to access health care information from the Internet on a range of topics including diabetes, asthma and Medicare. Some centers have joined online and formed on-site disease support groups to address residents' health concerns.

### **How are family properties promoting health care?**

- **Montani Towers** in Wheeling, West Virginia, in partnership with the Wheeling Jesuit University School of Nursing, offers a rotation site for groups of five to eight nursing students one day per week. The nursing students provide health education programs on resident-selected subjects, develop medical charts for each resident and perform health screens.
- **Cleme Manor** in Houston has partnered with the city health department to provide health screens for diabetes and HIV/AIDS as well as cholesterol and blood pressure checks from a mobile health van. Cleme Manor also participates in the city's Baby Net Program that connects young pregnant women with mentors to help during pregnancy and after the baby is born.
- **Villa America Apartments** in Houston has partnered with the city health department to teach HIV/AIDS prevention classes twice per month. The site has also partnered with the Texas Department of Agriculture to hold seminars for seniors regarding proper nutrition and exercise.

### **What health care services do centers offer seniors?**

- **Golden West** in Boulder, Colorado has partnered with a local hospital to host a clinic twice per month for residents aged 55 and older. Dental Aid offers a

dental screening and the county mental health department provides supportive counseling.

- **Lakeland Wesley Village** in Louisville, Kentucky has partnered with the city health department to hold ongoing sessions that include cancer prevention and proper nutrition information. The center's partnership with a hospital provides on-site medical examinations from a mobile health bus.

### **How are centers incorporating telehealth programs?**

- **Lancaster Village Apartments** in Detroit is using Medicare Compare ([www.medicare.gov/comparison](http://www.medicare.gov/comparison)) on the Internet to help residents compare Medicare HMO plans. Residents participate in Purple Tea, a breast cancer awareness and screening project for women and prostate cancer screenings for men.
- **Kirkland Union Manor** in Portland, Oregon retrieves health information from the Internet on specific diseases to be used for diabetes and other support group meetings. The site has three regular monthly clinics: a podiatry clinic, a blood pressure clinic and a hearing aid clinic.

### **Want to find out more about partnering with a Neighborhood Networks center in your area? Please contact us. Here's how:**

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